1:Sanders Z-5/4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

Woman's work in Greece, as elsewhere, does not lend itself to neat, logical treatment. It does not have a beginning or any definable end. As a result, discussion of it moves from one topic to another with no necessary connection between them except the fact of the woman's involvement. As a wife, she is a partner to her husband; she bears and mothers the children; she prepares the food and still makes much of the clothing at home; she helps with the farm tasks; she has the responsibility for keeping the family well, or at least seeing an ailing member through an illness. To follow the women through the variety of these experiences is to move to the center of family life in rural Greece.

Getting Along with the Lord and Master

The world of the Greek woman revolves around the man. When young, her first concern — and the concern of her family — is to find a man and, through a dowry, "buy" him. After marriage she moves unobtrusively in his orbit and keeps their children, when they begin to arrive, in their proper course. Tradition still influences the way the woman gets along with the man.

In any social relationship, including that between husband and wife, a pattern of dominance and subordination develops. The Greeks assume that the man has the higher position. One village woman, when commenting on this, said with genuine earnestness: "My husband is a superior being; I must keep my distance." This sentiment is reflected in the relative social status of men and women, as well as in legal, moral, political, and economic rights. But even in delineating the differences in status between husband and wife one must bear in mind that broad social changes are under way throughout all of Greece which are leading to a rise in woman's position.

Some indication of woman's place is given by the preference for boys over girls. In some parts of Greece, a man when asked how many children he has will reply: "Two sons and, begging your pardon, one daughter." Or he might say: "Two children, one girl." In some villages of Thrace, however, the father might use a poetic touch in answering "two sons, one guest," implying that the daughter's permanent home is that of her husband. Since, true to the patriarchal, agrarian tradition, the line is continued in the son, one of the tests of a father's manliness is his ability to procreate sons. Preference for a son is reinforced by the need to collect a dowry for a daughter, who thus represents an economic drain. Indeed, the interest in the sex of the unborn child is so great that many ways have been developed for predicting the birth of a boy or a girl. Such practices, although taken jokingly or at best semiseriously by many, do figure prominently in women's conversations.

In Aetolia a relatively simple method may be used. One need only take a piece of wood from the loom, put it in a public road, and see who passes over it. If a man does, a boy is on the way; if a woman, a girl. In Gortynia,

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

occasionally with her husband. In the presence of guests she defers to him, even when questions are asked about the house, unless he suggests that she give the answers. But this does not mean that she is lacking in self-respect or forthrightness. If King Paul should make a surprise visit to her village, she would greet him in her homespun clothes without any indication of subservience; if she should attend a school reception held for a graduating class including one of her children, she would be very much at ease and would talk to those who spoke to her.

Further insight into the husband-wife relationship may be derived from the type of letter Greek village men write to their wives when they are in military service. There are, of course, many personal and even local differences: the Cretan soldier writes much more lovingly than the one from Macedonia, for instance. In the many I have seen, however, there is a single, almost universal, formula:

> Dear wife, I salute you. If you ask about my health, I am fine. I hope the same goes for you. If you ask about me I am high up in the mountains somewhere in Greece. (I'm not allowed to tell where.) Longing for my home and all of you, I pray to God that soon I may be near you. [Now come all the problems of his farm.] Tell my brother John to look after the cow. Don't sell any property until I come. [If he has a couple of children, he will always express longing for the younger. If he has an unmarried sister who is engaged, he will say that he hopes, when he comes back, to arrange for her dowry. He is quite willing to surrender authority to his wife who is on the scene, which is quite the reverse of what he may do when he is at home. He will also boast in the letter about how good things are and how quickly they will lick the enemy. He may talk about his captain, if he is good, and say:] We have a fine captain and he promises to give me some leave as soon as things get easier. [He may also ask about the animals, mentioning them by name, especially the "home" animals. He will end the letter by naming all of his relatives and friends, perhaps eight or nine in number.] I kiss you, [wife's name], your husband, [his name].

To understand how the wife gets along with her "lord and master," one must also see the relationship the parents have with the children of the home. One person I spoke with who was very familiar with Greek rural life commented in the first place that the man is the nominal head of the home but that few people realize to how great an extent the woman is the administrator in the house. Although she has no acknowledged position, she is nevertheless very important. In many families she holds the purse. One of her sons earning money outside the home might give it to her to use in buying clothing or school books for the younger children. Her husband will consult with her if he is thinking of buying an ox, or if he wants to build a poultry house. He would talk over any improvements with her.

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

861 to extreme leniency. All with whom I talked agreed that children were sup-
594 posed to be obedient and respectful toward their parents, although now
[178] and then someone would point out that the world was "going to the dogs" because the youngsters were not as obedient as they used or ought to be. Fifteen teen-aged village boys from Northern Greece who were attending the American Farm School in Thessalonike were asked who had punished them when they misbehaved at home, and ten claimed that their mothers had disciplined them. When asked up to what age the mother exercised this control, they said up until fifteen or sixteen years of age. One boy from Epirus pointed out that he had a brother, now a teacher, who was still beaten by his mother when she thought it necessary. The mother is in a position to administer this punishment because the children in general feel much closer
594 to her than to the father. These schoolboys agreed that if they wanted something in the house, they would go directly to the mother for permission; if they wanted something (such as a pair of shoes) which their father would have to grant, they would go first to the mother with the request that she intercede for them.

858 Children, though disciplined, are also enjoyed. A child soon learns when he can rush into a family group and receive attention and when he is supposed to stay away because the adults are intent upon something else. But he can stay around and listen to what is said, perhaps comprehending little, yet not feeling shut out from the intimacy of the group.

594 Several people pointed out the close connection between child care and
855 the division of labor in the family. In some parts of Southern Greece, where
184 the women help only with the harvesting of the olives and grain, children receive better care because the mother is around the house. In Central and
[462] Northern Greece, where the mother is in the field much more of the time, the child undergoes more hardship. However, one informant pointed out that in the colder regions of the country the father was apt to be closer to his children, for he would sit with his family around the fireplace in the evening instead of going off to the coffeehouse. Even where the work of
861 the women differed, the approach to child discipline seemed to be about
184 the same, a fact which was reiterated time and again and borne out by personal observation. Furthermore, those who knew well both the so-called
[855] refugee villages and the other villages said that the homes in each were about the same as far as love and tenderness toward the child was concerned, even though the relative status of the woman differed. In matters of discipline, the native villagers are perhaps a little rougher in that they will use a stick whereas the refugee parents will be more apt to spank. When the child approaches eight years of age, the punishment will become more severe. Discipline is stricter with boys "since they are more disobedient."

857 The child is often a real economic asset. In some areas, such as the to-

2: Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) 963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

82 777 village culture: man must use human means toward human ends, and this is his first obligation not only to himself but to God.

156 578 621 In Vasilika, the same tension—the sense of a contest, of struggle, of agony, of a kind of pushing and pulling—is also a feature of a large number of encounters with other human beings. In earlier discussions I referred to the economic rivalries among families in the village and to the efforts to keep family activities private to the point where a kind of espionage is practiced by all the villagers to uncover secrets. These contests we may now understand as one manifestation of the agonistic quality of many human relationships within the village. But seemingly perpetual battles require an occasional respite; the nervous vitality [593] which they drain must be replenished. In Vasilika, some relationships within the family seem to contribute the respite and the energy to go on fighting the battles, whereas others appear to create the sense that perpetual struggle, principally outside the family, is a part of life. The family both starts the battle and also manufactures and distributes the weapons with which to fight it.

156 828 571 578 What is the ultimate aim of the battle, if I may continue the metaphor? It would seem that each man and woman seeks for identity, for a concept of self, and given the conditions of Greek village culture and its values, the search is carried on by pitting oneself against another, or against fate. One learns to know oneself primarily by contrast with others; and therefore the maintenance of some difference is a necessity. Contrasts, and the tension contrasts create, become expected and desired. Without change and variation the villagers lose their sense of life. But the need to engage in perptual struggle is an emotional burden, especially because there must be some who lose in the [558] contests. A man is not completely disgraced in the villagers' view, however, if he is bested in an encounter with another man, provided that he was willing to engage himself in the struggle in the first place and showed skill in his conduct of it. Just as agricultural failure is attributable to uncontrollable forces only [777] if a man did his physical best, so failure in human relations is attributable to some other force only if a man has first made a creditable effort. It would seem that it is not the outcome but the continuing *aghonia* that gives a village man or woman the feeling that he is a functioning human being, that he has an identity, that he is alive. *"Perazmena, ksebazmena,"* "What is past is forgotten," the villagers say, and although they say so mostly in connection with unpleasantness, the saying is equally applicable to victories. For both victory and defeat are shortlived; a new area of battle constantly supersedes the old.

156 828 867 858 This struggle is not something which is entered into as a new pattern when men and women take on the responsibilities of a family, after a childhood spent without it. On the contrary, Vasilika's culture is one of those in which there is a continuity in the behavior and attitudes expected of children, adolescents, and adults. There are no sharp breaks; from their earliest days the upbringing of children plunges them into the role of agonist, and skills for functioning in this fashion are acquired in all stages of a child's development.

The villagers assume that intelligence and self-control are basic human qualities which differentiate men from animals. The villagers are in many ways

2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) 963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

committed humanists and assume that once these traits are developed each man will have the strength to face life and its *vasana* (trials and pains). Since they believe that children, by virtue of being human, have these traits inherently, the family's obligation lies in developing the traits to the point where the child, when he becomes an adult, can fend for himself. But until he is capable of independence in this regard he is especially vulnerable, and he is both subjected to the strains which parallel those he will have as an adult and also bolstered by the protective sheltering devices which supplement his own gradually developing abilities.

The process of caring for infants even during the first four months of their lives furnishes illustrations. Vasilika's infants are dressed in diapers and shirts and are than wrapped, with their legs straightened and their arms held down at their side, first in several blankets and then in swaddling bands. The result is a firm but not tight enclosure of the entire baby except for his neck and his head. Mothers explain that the swaddling is meant for the physical protection of the infant against cold and against objects which might hurt him. They also explain that only by restraint of the infant's random movements will he be able to grow straight legs and back.

But when one watches a mother wrap her infant and sees her make the sign of the cross three times with her fist over the baby before putting the swaddling bands on, and when one sees her make a spitting gesture three times toward the infant before placing on the swaddling band itself the blue bead that is supposed to protect against the evil eye, it becomes clear that the process of wrapping an infant is meant to provide a spiritually protective enclosure too.

Babies' helplessness makes them especially penetrable to the evil forces of human envy and under these circumstances external spiritual or even magical forces are believed to be necessary. Children up to adolescence are considered vulnerable, as we have seen, and this is expressed, among other ways, in the encouragement they get to participate in the formal religion of the village. They are brought to some church services as infants (except that both mother and infant are secluded at home and are specifically prohibited from entering the church for the first forty days after birth) and by the time they are three years old, children can stand quietly near an older member of their family through the entire two-hour Sunday liturgy. Parents encourage their children to join the young girls of the village in the Good Friday and Easter preparations as part of an expressed expectation that it will be good for their health. Fractious or complaining children, even when not ill, are thought to be suffering from the effects of the evil eye and may be taken to the priest for a special individual blessing to help dispel the influence.

As we have seen in connection with the blessing of a new house and its permanent sacred corner, God's protection and man's pleas for His grace continue as an accepted part of the life of the adults of the village. Here we may add briefly that this remains true even though adult men attend church services less frequently than women and ritual abstinences during Lent and similar formal requirements of the Greek Orthodox Church are not rigidly or systematically ad-

2: Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

methods is to ask the same questions in different ways at different times, and an outsider is often struck by the persistence with which such questioning on the same issue is carried on over many months. Not to succeed in gathering a choice bit of knowledge is no disgrace—the villagers keep trying and every man stays on the alert to guard his secrets.

There are some kinds of verbal communication that are outside the realm of agonistic relationships and in a sense provide a respite from them. These are the ritual phrases, which constitute proper responses to frequently recurring common life situations.

Village manners require the use of a wide variety of greetings at meeting and at parting. In addition to these, there are a large number of appropriate set phrases for life crisis situations, large and small. For example, one says *"Kali eleftherya,"* "Good deliverance," to a pregnant woman, "May they live for you" to a parent showing you a picture of his children, "May it pass for you" to an ill person or to any member of his family, "To your health" to a person wearing new clothes, and so on. "Many years" is the wish expressed to everyone on saints' days. This list is far from complete, but illustrates the point that although the phrases are formulaic and are most often used without conscious awareness of their literal meanings, they are apotropaic in feeling. In other words, the villagers have a vague sense that the phrases, which are good wishes, may succeed in warding off evil. Certainly the formulas also serve as an immediate expression of the good intentions of the speaker toward another in a potentially stressful situation.

Transmission of Values

Some of the weapons used in agonistic relationships in the village and some of the processes by which children acquire the necessary skills to use them have been considered. It remains to complete the discussion of the kinds of values and attitudes inculcated in children and to show the relationship of all the foregoing to the question: Who are the actors in the contests of Vasilika, and what are the social alignments which form the structural base of these human relationships in the village?

If, as we have seen, obedience to elders is not a virtue which parents stress to regulate the behavior of children, and if affection is interspersed with ridicule so that children cannot depend completely on the parents' support, by what mechanism do the villagers' children acquire the prevailing standards of behavior? It has already been suggested that the villagers act as if they believed that human beings, by virtue of their humanity, have brains. It may now be added that they also believe that inherent in every child is a sense of integrity which, in English, is best translated as shame. Parents do not feel that they have to implant these traits in their children but expect to bring them to the surface and to put to use qualities which the child already has within himself.[3] Each child is believed to have rudimentary intelligence which will develop into rational

[3] I am indebted to Popie Mohring for this phrasing.

2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959)1963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

judgment, not through formal academic education, but by a natural flowering of common sense based on ordinary experience. Small children who get too near the fire or run too long in the sun are not scolded for disobedience but are excused on the grounds that they do not yet know any better. *"Dhen gzeri,"* they say, "He doesn't know." As children grow older, however, the same misbehavior is treated as a sign of unintelligence and accusations of stupidity may be flung at the child. *"Dhen echis myalo?,"* "Don't you have a brain?" they say.

The quality of shame which the villagers want to emphasize in their children is an inner sense of embarrassment at the thought of improperly revealing oneself—either the physical self (modesty) or the inner emotional self. The words for shame, which cluster about the term *endropi,* are used in at least three different contexts. When children refuse to talk to strangers, and smaller ones literally hide behind a parent, the elders say as an excuse, *"Drepete,"* "He is bashful." For young children to feel embarrassment at revealing themselves to strangers is proper in the villagers' view. As children grow older, girls are expected to be more modest than boys and shyness remains an excuse for females after it ceases to be one for males. The older women of the village, for example, find it difficult to join the men and visitors at a feast table; they prefer to eat in another room. They go into the *saloni* after their guests have finished eating and sit without speaking near the walls of the room. Villagers know that urban women do not have such reticences and they feel it necessary to make some excuse for their wives. *"Dreponde,"* they say, "They are ashamed," and although modesty as applied to a refusal to eat with one's guests is no longer fashionable, neither is it considered a disgrace to the husband or children.

A second use of the word for shame occurs when children show lack of self-control at stages in their development when it is already expected of them, *"Min drepese?"* "Aren't you ashamed?" is often a reaction of elders to a child who is less cleanly or orderly by village standards than he should be. Excessive running or shouting, physical fights with other children, loud and prolonged vituperation, enjoyment of food which borders on gluttony—these are the kinds of actions greeted with the suggestion that the child is exhibiting to the world too much of his inner needs. It is not the existence of the need that is considered bad, but rather the inability to control its expression. If he cannot exercise sufficient control, the child is not utilizing his sense of shame as is proper; he is making an unseemly exhibition of himself.

Although shame is considered an internal individual emotion, the process by which the villagers reveal his sense of shame to a child includes exaggerating and parading before others any evidence of possible shamelessness. That is, children are not merely asked *"Min drepese?"* but the action they should not have engaged in is often made much of and enlarged so that whatever inner discomfort is inculcated is reinforced by invoking the ridicule of outsiders. On one of our returns to the village for a brief stay, I visited one of my friends and casually asked where her five-year-old daughter was. Her mother answered that the child was probably hiding because she had been scolded for getting mud splattered on her dress. Some time later, as I was leaving, the mother caught sight of the little girl trying to hide herself on a narrow window ledge as she peeked out to catch

2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959)1963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

reply is commonly *"Amesos!"* "Immediately!" or *"Eftasa!"* "I have arrived already!" These answers are forms only; younger children often set out at a run; others proceed at whatever pace pleases them at the moment. But the significance of these phrases for us is that *"gligbord"* is never used by a younger person to an older one.

These expressions of deference, on the one hand, and of imperiousness, on the other, are outward signs of noncompeting relationships, because each age group and, by extension, each social status has rights, duties, and obligations, with one set of these shading gradually into the other with sufficient separation so that a complementary rather than a competing relationship predominates. Preschool children are expected to learn what elders in all categories teach them and otherwise have few responsibilities. School children, both boys and girls, take on the burdens of life, because their success in school is a matter of vital concern to themselves and their families. During school holidays school children from ages seven to twelve are expected to help with farm work. When they have finished elementary school the children consider themselves adult (they said so in a set of essays we asked them to write on what they wanted to do when they were grown) and expect to contribute to the welfare of their families, either by taking on more and more responsibilities on the farm, or by apprenticeships to trades. This is the period in which comradeship is most possible. Each boy tends to have one other boy as a friend and companion. They visit festivals together, go to the coffeehouse, and play cards together. Girls have less opportunity for free movement and are more likely to sit and work with their age companions in neighborhood work groups. Whatever work these older boys and girls do on the farm is supervised by their elders, and the supervision is accepted. Nevertheless, as explained already, each person has the right to contribute his suggestions and advice, and although a father or older man has the right to make the final decision, he rarely chooses one that will anger his younger assistants.

Here again, the young people work in a complementary relation with other members of the family; their goals are the same as those of their elders—to do well so that a good marriage can eventually be arranged—and the various means by which to achieve these goals are not in dispute. In spite of the rapid and accelerating technological and material changes in the village since the end of World War I, these changes have not led to conflicts between the generations. As earlier chapters have indicated, old people are basically no less "progressive" than their juniors; young and old continue to agree on the goals and on the means to achieve them as they change, and each has his part to play in the achievement of the approved ends. The grandparent generation joins with the rest.

Once the young people have married, they either continue as farmers in the household of their parents and gradually take over more of the supervision of the work, or work separately as a new elementary family. Therefore, to return to our original remark, the agonistic quality is not characteristic of relations between the generations.

The kind of competition we have been describing as agonistic does not prevail between the sexes in Vasilika. Men and women are considered far too different from each other for that.